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Wednesday, 27 July 2016, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Bessho	(Japan)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Lucas
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Egypt	Mr. Moustafa
	France	Mr. Lamek
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	New Zealand	Mr. Taula
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	Senegal	Mr. Seck
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	Ukraine	Mr. Vitrenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Ms. Power
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Ramírez Carreño

Agenda

Peace and security in Africa

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Peace and security in Africa

The President: In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, and Mr. Stephen O'Brien, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Mr. Feltman.

Mr. Feltman: I thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity to brief the Council on the situation in the Lake Chad Basin region.

Attacks by Boko Haram continue, mainly in north-eastern Nigeria and southern Niger, and to a lesser extent in northern Cameroon and the Lac region of Chad. Terrorists persist in targeting innocent civilians, often using young children. Despite commendable regional efforts, the group continues to threaten regional stability, as illustrated by the 3 June attack on a military base in Bosso town, south-eastern Niger.

Lake Chad Basin countries face a serious humanitarian crisis. Significant numbers of refugees and internally displaced people add pressure on host communities that are already food-insecure. The Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Stephen O'Brien, will brief the Council on the humanitarian challenges.

The United Nations has received reports of an increase in the number of incidents of sexual and gender-based violence among the displaced. In Nigeria, the Protection Working Group, comprising the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Nigerian National Human Rights Commission, reports rape and sexual abuse in almost half of the 26 sites covered.

In Cameroon, allegations of human rights abuses committed by security forces persist, especially against youth belonging to Muslim communities in the north. Vigilante groups going after suspected suicide bombers have injured innocent civilians.

To protect human rights, the States concerned must ensure accountability for serious violations by national forces and that the use of force is in full compliance with international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law. States must adopt measures to protect civilians and respect due process when dealing with persons arrested for Boko Haram-related charges. Children used by Boko Haram should be treated as victims and dealt with in accordance with international standards for juvenile justice. We welcome the establishment of a human rights desk by the Nigerian army to investigate allegations of human rights violations committed by its forces, and we encourage other affected countries to institute similar mechanisms.

The Boko Haram crisis has devastated the region's economy. Economic growth has dropped sharply with the decline in the price of oil and other commodities. Decreasing resources affect States' ability to deliver basic social services and to pay the salaries of security forces and civil servants.

Insecurity has disrupted trade routes between Chad and Nigeria, interrupting the supply of basic goods and resulting in price hikes. Youth unemployment is at a worrisome high, providing a recruitment ground for Boko Haram. We urge that military operations be complemented with development interventions, including to address the effects of climate change.

We commend the Lake Chad Basin countries' efforts to combat Boko Haram. The regional offensive involving Chadian, Cameroonian, Nigerien and Nigerian troops operating under the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) has recaptured 80 per cent of the areas once under Boko Haram control, freed thousands of captives and prevented terrorist attacks.

I returned yesterday after visiting a number of Central and West African countries. As part of my tour, I met with President Idriss Deby Itno in N'Djamena and visited MNJTF headquarters. MNJTF's main challenge remains a severe lack of funding. The 1 February African Union donor conference aimed to mobilize $750 million, of which only $250 million was pledged; even less was disbursed. The success of MNJTF operations also depends on timely and actionable intelligence as well as specialized counter-terrorism skills and equipment, given the evolving tactics of Boko Haram.

So far, the Lake Chad Basin countries have borne the financial responsibility of combating Boko Haram despite their own economic crises. As President Deby Itno explained to me with frustration, they have been forced to divert national spending away from basic services to security. Lake Chad Basin leaders have expressed their growing impatience over delays by international partners to support the MNJTF financially.

I commend the United Kingdom for its financial support to the MNJTF and welcome the European Union's intention to commit funds for the operationalization of the force. I urge the international community to support the MNJTF through the mobilization of the required political, logistical and financial support.

The United Nations supports national and regional efforts to prevent and combat terrorism and to ensure that the perpetrators of terrorism are brought to justice. However, counter-terrorist operations must abide by the rule of law and international human rights norms. MNJTF commanders reassured me that every effort was being made to protect human rights, including by the deployment of dedicated personnel to monitor human rights issues.

Further to the Council's request to extend the Integrated Assistance on Countering Terrorism (I-ACT) initiative to the Group of Five (G-5) Sahel region, the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF) is working closely with the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel to develop the G-5 Sahel I-ACT In this regard, CTITF, accompanied by the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, will meet G-5 representatives from 30 August to 1 September in Nouakchott to produce the outline of a capacity-building framework for counter-terrorism and the prevention of violent extremism, including concrete regional projects.

The Chairman of the Counter-Terrorism Committee will also visit the Lake Chad Basin countries in October, accompanied by the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General for Central Africa and for West Africa and the Sahel, CTED, CTITF and the Special Representative of the African Union for Counter-Terrorism Cooperation. In Central Africa, the United Nations Centre for Counter-Terrorism supports the efforts of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa to implement the Central Africa counter-terrorism strategy. It will meet with partners in the fall to discuss specific projects.

A military approach, while essential, will not bring an end to the Boko Haram threat. Affected countries must tackle not only the humanitarian consequences, but also the root causes that contributed to the emergence of the group, including the social, economic and political grievances of marginalized communities. The Special Representatives for Central Africa and for West Africa and the Sahel continue to encourage regional interlocutors to address the Boko Haram crisis holistically and beyond an exclusively security-oriented lens. Lake Chad Basin countries need our support so that military operations are followed by stabilization measures and the restoration of State authority.

The Second Regional Security Summit for the Lake Chad Basin, held on 14 May in Abuja, reaffirmed the need to address the root causes. Among a number of noteworthy recommendations, the Summit encouraged affected countries to utilize the services of community and religious leaders to discourage impressionable youth from being radicalized and to lead deradicalization programmes. The Summit took note of the negative consequences of climate change, affecteing the livelihoods of those who depend on Lake Chad, in particular young people. The Summit urged the concerned countries and partners to support the restoration of Lake Chad as part of a strategy to combat Boko Haram.

The United Nations stands ready to support the Lake Chad Basin countries in addressing both the consequences and the root causes of Boko Haram. We encourage the leaders of the Economic Community of Central African States and the Economic Community of West African States to hold their long-planned joint Ministerial Summit to adopt a common regional strategy to address the crisis. The Security Council's support would help underscore the urgency of the matter.

The President: I thank Mr. Feltman for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. O'Brien.

Mr. O'Brien: I thank you, Sir, for this opportunity to brief the Security Council on the humanitarian situation in the Lake Chad Basin. I also thank my colleague, Under-Secretary-General Jeffrey Feltman, and endorse his clear and powerful statement.

The Lake Chad Basin region, which hosts Africa's fastest growing displacement crisis, needs our urgent, united and collective attention. Violence and brutality to the most heinous, barbaric and unconscionable extent — almost unimaginable — as perpetrated by Boko Haram are resulting in massive forced displacement, human rights violations, severe disruptions to livelihoods, and unprecedented humanitarian needs in a region that was already endemically and deeply vulnerable.

As I witnessed during my travels to north-east Nigeria and south-east Niger and their capitals just a few weeks ago in May, boundless insecurity has deepened the vulnerability of communities in that fragile region, which was already impacted by severe climate, climate change, progressive desertification, environmental degradation — including the massive drying-up of Lake Chad itself, straddling the unpoliceable borders of four countries — the highest population growth in the world, and our planet's most widespread, chronic and deepest extreme poverty. The region remains precarious for every one of the millions of our fellow human beings there, and the current exacerbated crisis vastly surpasses the capacity of national and local authorities to respond. People across the Lake Chad Basin desperately need our help.

Across the Lake Chad Basin, spanning parts of Nigeria, the Niger, Chad and Cameroon, the United Nations estimates that over 9 million people need humanitarian assistance. About 2.8 million of these people have been displaced, fleeing violent attacks in their towns and villages. They include people like 52-year-old grandfather Mustafa, newly relocated into a 7x7-foot wood and sheeting shelter, after having fled from his torched lifetime house in Bama 11 months earlier, when Boko Haram brutes ransacked his village. He bravely held his shard of mirror to tell me he was still trying to be the barber he had always been, but his stoicism could not hold back the tears provoked by his fears or his plea for our help.

Many are in camps, where living conditions are grim, but the vast majority are living with host communities that are themselves among the world's poorest and most vulnerable people, living in the Sahel zone which faces chronic drought and food insecurity that place over 1 million children's lives at risk year in, year out. Using next season's seeds to feed those they have taken in, hundreds of thousands of farmers have missed three successive years of planting, leaving them without any stocks or income whatsoever to live on.

Vital trade routes have been severely disrupted, leaving an estimated 5.2 million people severely food insecure. People in the Lake Chad Basin are some of the toughest in the world. They are used to coping with extreme hardship, exploiting every and any option they can to keep their families going. But as many of the affected people themselves told me during my visit, this suffering has pushed them to the absolute limit; it is unlike anything they have felt before. Personally, I have been traveling throughout that region on and off for the past 37 years, and I have never heard such fear and desperation. This is a new terrible.

Children are particularly vulnerable, especially the 1.7 million who have been displaced across the Lake Chad Basin. Children risk being abducted and forcibly recruited by Boko Haram to take part in the violence, including by acting as suicide bombers. From January to June this year, more than 50 children have been coerced into carrying out suicide bombings across the four countries. Gender-based violence and sexual exploitation are widespread, and women and girls are at great risk of forced abduction into sexual slavery.

Nigeria is bearing the brunt of the crisis, despite the significant efforts undertaken by the federal and local authorities to address this burgeoning catastrophe. Seven million of the nine million people in need across the Lake Chad Basin are in Nigeria. As the Nigerian army has progressively regained control of a number of towns and villages in Borno state, up in its north-east centred round Maiduguri, aid agencies have gradually been able to access new areas. What we have uncovered and assessed is deeply, distressingly alarming even for those of us who have witnessed such depths of humanitarian need before..

Last month, the Nigerian authorities rightly declared a nutrition emergency for Borno state. Direct reports from the field indicate that affected communities are rapidly running out of food. We have no time to lose. The lean season, which puts millions at real risk of hunger and malnutrition each year across the Lake Chad Basin region, has already started. If we do not act now, the human suffering will only become more extreme. Children are no exception. UNICEF reports that in Borno state alone, 244,000 children are suffering from severe acute malnutrition. Among them, almost one in five risks death this year if they are not

treated. That is 134 children dying each day from a preventable condition. We have to stop this — and we can with will, money, urgency and coordination.

While the sheer number of people suffering is mainly in Nigeria, all of the affected countries are deeply vulnerable. In the Niger, one single attack by Boko Haram left over 70,000 people displaced in Bosso town in June, bringing the total number of displaced people in the Diffa region to over 160,000. The Niger is the poorest country in the world; yet despite living on virtually nothing, families there have welcomed the displaced into their homes and shared their meagre supplies of food and water with the newcomers, as I saw for myself with utter humility and total admiration, in equal parts, when I visited Fatimah in Diffa, who had voluntarily taken in two families, 11 people in all, sharing her diminishing staple food supplies and her very modest home.

Needs are also dire in Chad's Lac region, where there are over 60,000 registered displaced persons, and tens of thousands who have not yet been registered. In the Far North region of Cameroon, which has been under a state of emergency and lock-down for security reasons, the number of people in need of immediate food assistance has quadrupled since June 2015, to over 200,000 today, and the total number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) increased in the same period to around 190,000. Severe acute malnutrition rates for children under 5 have surpassed the emergency threshold in the three neighbouring countries, as is the case in Nigeria. And the three departments along the east of Cameroon were already food-insecure because of taking in over a quarter of a million refugees from Central African Republic's violent conflict over the past two years, with as yet few of those people returning to that country.

Humanitarian actors have been scaling up their assistance, despite a dangerous operating environment. Since January, the humanitarian country team has been able to reach 2 million people with primary health-care outpatient services in north-east Nigeria, including close to 91,500 people in the areas of Borno state, where the State has re-established a presence. As of the end of June, the World Food Programme (WFP) had provided 54,000 children at risk of malnutrition with supplementary food, and the agency is targeting 1 million people for food assistance this year. In the first half of 2016, 148,000 girls and boys were reached with psychosocial support through child-friendly spaces across the four affected countries. However, as is clear, considerably more needs to be done — and now.

Humanitarian agencies are taking a regional approach. Last week, the humanitarian country teams in Cameroon and Nigeria partnered to provide vital cross-border assistance to people in Banki, Nigeria, where up to 20,000 IDPs had been cut off from aid since last year. The food and relief items were transported by road from Cameroon and then distributed by WFP staff from Nigeria, in close cooperation with national authorities in both countries.

It is urgent that we continue those efforts and complement them with increased development assistance. We must be ready to capitalize on the advances made by the Nigerian State to regain control of territory, as evidenced by the recent reopening of the road leading east from Maiduguri to Dikwa, along which I could not travel even on 19 May. That is essential to promote trade and income generation along that vital road axis. But we must be clear — to ourselves and to the Nigerian Government also: this is not just a security issue. The Lake Chad Basin, and the protracted violence of the terrorists of Boko Haram, is for the millions of people there, caught up in this for years, as much, or now even more, a humanitarian catastrophe as it is a security priority. We, the international community and the Nigerian Government, must act accordingly.

Protection must be at the core of the humanitarian response, particularly for women and children, who are at severe risk of exploitation and abuse. Without more help, villagers are left to defend themselves. In the town of Baga Sola in Chad, villagers have erected their own checkpoint to try to fend off further attacks. It is nothing more than a flimsy rope. Said a youth manning it,

> "We are unarmed, so if anybody comes with explosives or attacks us, we will hold him down until the police arrives".

The affected countries have themselves recognized and drawn attention to those protection concerns. Last month, the Governments of Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and the Niger held a regional protection dialogue and agreed on a set of comprehensive actions to enhance protection and respond to the most urgent needs of refugees, internally displaced persons and other affected populations. I commend the four countries for that strong initiative, and urge them to fully implement the commitments made.

Despite the best efforts by the regional authorities and humanitarian actors to expand their reach and scale up life-saving assistance, the means to support the humanitarian response in north-east Nigeria, and throughout the Lake Chad Basin, do not match the staggering scale of need. The 2016 humanitarian response plan for Nigeria is only 28 per cent funded, while those for the Niger, Cameroon and Chad are similarly underfunded. In noting that the United Kingdom has provided $18.5 million in humanitarian support for people in the Lake Chad Basin States, I earnestly appeal again to Member States to make their first, or to increase their contribution, to the ongoing humanitarian operation rapidly — and now.

Earlier this month, at the initiative of the humanitarian community, including the Regional Humanitarian Coordinator and the country teams in Nigeria, the Niger, Cameroon and Chad, developed a 90-day plan highlighting the priority humanitarian needs. A united call for $221 million in funding between July and the end of September to address life-saving needs was made. I welcome the generous new pledges and contributions that have been made following the release of the 90-day plan. That adds to the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) allocation of $13 million for Nigeria that I approved at the end of June — and the nearly $90 million already provided by the CERF to the Lake Chad Basin since last year. The scale of CERF's allocation is something of a record in terms of the quantum for one, albeit regional, crisis. CERF funds are being made available nimbly and rapidly, which I judge to be wholly necessary and proportionate. But — please note — it is intended to jump-start, not be a substitute for, Member State contributions.

I am working with my counterparts in humanitarian agencies to take measures to continue to quickly scale up capacity at the field level, where it is most required. That includes deploying additional United Nations staff, establishing operational hubs, mobilizing relief supplies and deploying international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which is central to the response. Agencies such as UNICEF, the WFP and the International Organization for Migration, as well as their NGO partners, have ambitious scale-up plans that require urgent resources to implement.

We urgently need to strengthen international attention to this neglected crisis. For months, I have been shouting into what feels like an empty room to highlight the dire situation in the Lake Chad Basin. My trip to the region in May was part of that effort. Ambassador Power's visit to the region in April was also vital in shedding light on this dreadful situation. I also want to take this opportunity to thank the Government of the United States and the European Commission for partnering with the United Nations and the affected countries on an event focused on the humanitarian situation in the Lake Chad Basin during the Economic and Social Council session one month ago. It was also highlighted in a packed side-event at the World Humanitarian Summit on 23 May.

We all know that the humanitarian response in itself is insufficient to re-establish people's lives and livelihoods. We must move from delivering aid to ending need — a crucial outcome endorsed at the World Humanitarian Summit. That means that, in parallel to providing life-saving assistance and protection, which we as humanitarians do, we need a concerted effort with political actors to address the root causes of the violence, as Under-Secretary-General Jeffrey Feltman highlighted moments ago. To move from delivering aid to ending need, we must work with development partners to address the drivers of vulnerability across the region. It is also important to recognize that national authorities in the four countries have been investing in ensuring greater security for their people, but that they cannot do it alone. We need to give them our support and partnership in this effort.

Finally, during my mission, I visited a camp in Konduga, Nigeria, that hosts some 1,600 displaced people. During my visit, I met a group of displaced women and men who had fled from Bama, some 35 kilometres away. As we sat on the ground, Aissa, Amina, Falmata and Bukar — all of whom had had to flee Bama — described vividly how venturing outside the camp to fetch firewood carried the risk of attack or abduction by Boko Haram, and how they continued to live in abject fear. They also shared with me their concerns for their children, who were not getting enough food and no longer went to school.

These displaced persons who I met, and so many others affected by this crisis, desperately need assistance and protection. In the camp, I witnessed not only human suffering, but also the aspirations of so many individuals and families to a better future — or perhaps I should say to be more accurate, a future. They are looking to the United Nations, to the Security Council and to all of us for urgently needed help. It is within our power to be relevant, and to do the right

thing for our fellow human beings who need us most requires our determination, our decision and the will to provide— in very real resources — the means. I urge the Security Council today not to fail the people in and around the Lake Chad Basin.

The President: I thank Mr. O'Brien for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): I thank you, Mr. President, for agreeing to hold this meeting at our request. I also thank Mr. Feltman and Mr. O'Brien for their highly effective briefings today.

I would like to begin with the harrowing words of Stefan Heunis, a photographer working for Agence France-Presse who visited a camp for internally displaced people near Maiduguri in Nigeria. Stefan wrote this in his blog earlier today:

> "The camp is now home to nearly 16,000 people and is growing by the day. You can practically taste the despair — there is no food, few opportunities and no shade. Flies looking for moisture in the dry heat pester the eyes and mouths of women and children too weak to swat them away. What strikes me most about severe acute malnutrition is the deformation it causes. The head becomes much bigger in proportion to the body, and the angular changes of the skeleton. Bones start protruding from under the skin, almost piercing it."

This humanitarian nightmare is the direct consequence of Boko Haram. They are a group that we are all familiar with. We all called out in unison for the return of those young women from Chibok. We all demanded: "Bring back our girls!". But now, over two years on, can we say that we have really maintained our focus? Today is our chance to bring overdue attention back to this crisis.

The plight of the people of the Lake Chad Basin is almost beyond comprehension. Because of Boko Haram's anarchy, millions across the region now require urgent humanitarian assistance. Around 800,000 people are living on the verge of famine, and for many, I fear that we are simply too late. So many of those in need are children. As Stephen said, UNICEF estimates that as many as a quarter of a million children are now suffering from severe acute malnutrition in Borno state. Around one in five will die if they do not receive urgent treatment. So, we must act fast, and I thank you again, Mr. President, for convening this meeting so speedily. I see three priorities ahead.

First, strong clear leadership from the United Nations is needed to coordinate the international effort, particularly given the challenging conditions on the ground and the continued instability. We strongly support the work already done by the United Nations, including to raise the international profile of the plight of these communities, but it is also imperative that the international community and the Governments of the region redouble their efforts to support the United Nations, so that together we can significantly scale up the delivery of urgently needed support. That means putting our hands in our pockets.

The United Kingdom was one of the first donors to respond to this crisis, and I thank Stephen for acknowledging that fact. In 2015, we provided $32 million in humanitarian assistance in the Niger, Chad and northern Cameroon, and this year we have already provided an additional $34 million. In Nigeria, we have provided nearly $11 million to support conflict-affected people in the north-east and will provide an additional $42 million over the next three years. We are currently considering where we could do more, and I hope that others around this table will do the same. We look to the United Nations for further details on the priority needs in the region and how we can best support their plans for their response. But we know that this is not just about money, so we strongly support the deployment of additional United Nations staff to the region, particularly those with relevant experience in dealing with such complex ongoing humanitarian crises.

My second point is about protection, which must be at the centre of our response to this crisis. So many people in the Lake Chad Basin have suffered at the hands of Boko Haram and fled their towns and villages in response, so it is vital that the displaced be returned to their homes only when it is safe to do so. We encourage all actors to work together to report, mitigate and address protection violations against displaced people, refugees and other vulnerable groups. We support the work being done by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and Governments of the region on this issue.

My third and final point is that while it is vital that we treat the symptoms of this crisis and quickly, we also need to address the root causes. That means stopping the conflict. Defeating Boko Haram across the region will

require a comprehensive approach that builds stability, tackles extremist narratives and addresses the root causes of instability, including economic and political development. It is a comprehensive approach that needs to put the protection and empowerment of women at its centre, combatting the misogyny and oppression that are so ingrained in violent extremism. It is an approach that needs to offer something that the extremists can never provide — the rule of law. For that reason, it is vital that any action against Boko Haram be fully compliant with human rights standards. Ultimately, it is a comprehensive approach that we all need to support.

As Jeff kindly highlighted, the United Kingdom has provided $6.5 million to the Multinational Joint Task Force, and we are also providing military intelligence and humanitarian and development support to Nigeria. I hope that all members of the Council will play their part to tackle both the humanitarian crisis and the scourge that has created it. I look forward to hearing from all gathered here about how, between us, we can step up.

Mr. Moustafa (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Today's briefings, in addition to that held in May under the Egyptian presidency (see S/PV.7699), based on the Spanish initiative regarding the challenges facing the Sahel region and Africa, have demonstrated the multifaceted and multidimensional nature of the crisis in the Lake Chad Basin and the Sahel. Indeed, the Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin face various interconnected and complex challenges related to insecurity in northern Mali and Libya; the growth of organized crime, particularly trafficking of drugs, weapons and human beings; and the increase of terrorism in the region, notably as perpetrated by Boko Haram.

In addition, new, non-traditional challenges have arisen. Climate change has had an impact on the way of life and the socioeconomic situation of the region, as have humanitarian challenges in the form of displacement of some 4.2 million people from the Sahel and the Lake Chad basin and the need of 2.9 million people for emergency humanitarian assistance, as Mr. O'Brien mentioned.

Egypt supports all efforts undertaken by the countries of the Lake Chad basin and Benin, members of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), to combat Boko Haram. Egypt commends the leadership shown by the countries of the region to counter this threat. On this point, the latest military operations of the MNJTF have weakened Boko Haram and made it possible to arrest many of its members. We welcome the fact that the Force has fulfilled its role and carried out its mission in accordance with international humanitarian law and international law and in full compliance with human rights. However, in spite of the achievements of the Force in fighting Boko Haram, it still requires the support of the international community, as noted by the representative of the United Kingdom, so that the Force can restore security in the Lake Chad basin.

Egypt encourages all regional and international partners to provide increased support to the Multinational Joint Task Force, especially in the areas of training and capacity-building and in terms of equipment and logistics. Egypt also urges all partners to fulfil the pledges they made at the donor conference for the Multinational Joint Task Force, held in Addis Ababa in February, towards the establishment of a trust fund for the support of African Union forces. With regard to support for the MNJTF, Egypt will work to ensure that the Centre for Conflict Resolution and Peacekeeping in Africa, created in Cairo, will work at the regional level to provide African solutions for African problems.

We are profoundly worried about the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the Lake Chad basin and in the Sahel. We stress the importance of undertaking greater efforts to find a response to this humanitarian crisis and focus on both the humanitarian and political aspects of the crisis. We also reiterate our appeal for a holistic approach, including focus on political, military, humanitarian and development dimensions, in addressing the problems facing the countries of the Lake Chad Basin. Egypt has consistently supported a comprehensive approach to dealing with and overcoming the phenomenon of terrorism and restoring peace by investing in the institutional and human resources of the region. This is the topic that the Security Council will consider tomorrow during the ministerial debate on peacebuilding in Africa.

Dealing with the humanitarian crisis in the region requires putting the crisis at the top of the list of priorities of the international community and shedding light on its scope and impact and on the suffering it has caused to people in the region. It is also important to call upon all international and regional partners to supply the resources needed to lessen the suffering of millions of women, children and displaced persons. We call on tomorrow's meeting to focus on development

and humanitarian aspects with a view to ensuring security for areas liberated from Boko Haram.

Finally, the crisis in the Lake Chad basin requires the solidarity of the international community and coordination of efforts by the United Nations agencies, regional and subregional organizations as well as Governments of the region, based on the various cooperation and coordination mechanisms. Egypt stands ready to step up its cooperation with the Governments of the Lake Chad basin countries through the Egyptian Agency of Partnership for Development in order to put an end to the interconnected crises that the region is experiencing.

Mr. Lucas (Angola): We start by commending the delegation of the United Kingdom for calling for the convening of today's meeting. We thank the Under-Secretaries-General for Political and Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Jeffrey Feltman and Mr. Stephen O'Brien, respectively, for their insightful briefings on a critical situation prevailing in the Lake Chad Basin, a region in the heart of Africa facing huge challenges that threaten the very existence of Lake Chad and the survival of millions of people living on it shores. It is our hope and expectation that today's meeting will further contribute to sensitizing world public opinion and the international community to this very serious issue.

The challenges facing the region are of three distinct but often interrelated natures: environmental degradation due to climate change and human actions; security threats linked to poverty, unemployment, youth radicalization and terrorism; and the huge humanitarian crisis unfolding against the backdrop of high rates of population growth, extreme poverty, and the food and nutrition crisis.

Lake Chad's resources benefit around 20 million people living on its shores in four countries. The lake supports the peasant economy of local people who see their sources of livelihood in peril and the lake at the brink of ecological disaster, as it has become a tiny fraction of its former size. A set of factors such as shifting climate patterns and human activities, namely, the diversion of large quantities of water from inflowing rivers, the irrigation for crop production and an increasing population's demand for water, have had a strong impact on and triggered the diminution of the lake's size. Several initiatives at the national and regional levels aimed at managing the lake's shrinking water resources and at reversing the trend towards its extinction have been undertaken. These initiatives are a demonstration of the concern by the people, Governments and the international community with respect to the current state of affairs.

The Lake Chad Basin Commission, a regional initiative established with the objectives of, inter alia, regulating and controlling the use of water and other natural resources in the basin, while relatively active and having made some achievements, has not delivered visible improvements in the lake's water replenishment. The Lake Chad Basin Commission has developed the Lake Chad replenishment project with the objective of regenerating the lake through the transfer of 900 cubic metres per second of water from the Ubangi River by way of a navigable channel to Lake Chad aimed at reversing land and water degradation and reviving the lake's ecosystem. Being an ambitious project, it has the potential to radically change the current situation in the Basin and the lives of its populations.

The countries of the region should assume their irrevocable responsibilities and strengthen their political will in order to mobilize the international community, which should seriously consider extending tangible support to the project. If the current situation is not rapidly reversed, it has the potential to become yet another hotbed of crisis and conflict and a real threat to regional and international peace and security. In short, the Lake Chad Basin is no longer able to secure the livelihoods of the people living on its shores, a state of affairs that is triggering a threatening security situation and the current humanitarian crisis.

The security situation in the Lake Chad Basin has continuously deteriorated over the past few years, against the backdrop of shrinking resources. Poverty and joblessness create a reservoir of radicalization, violent extremism and willing recruits for the terrorists. The seven-year-old Boko Haram insurgency that spread from Nigeria into Chad, the Niger and Cameroon prompted countries bordering Lake Chad to join forces in the Multinational Joint Task Force, on the understanding that a collaborative and cooperative regional approach would be the most effective way of denying safe havens to the terrorists, whilst strengthening those countries' military capabilities to face and defeat Boko Haram. The Multinational Joint Task Force was endorsed by the African Union in January 2015, and the Security Council commended Lake Chad Basin countries and Benin for their efforts to operationalize the Multinational Joint Task Force.

Despite progress in the fight against Boko Haram, the terrorists are still active in the region, intensifying asymmetric attacks and continuing their rampage of terror, death and destruction. It is imperative that the international community support the Multinational Task Force and the countries of the region in consolidating the gains achieved to date in the fight against terrorism in the region.

The recurring nature of food insecurity and poverty in the region requires a concerted effort to assist the most vulnerable, prevent severe hunger and malnutrition and ensure that communities in distress are able to recover. Although the Governments of the region are making efforts to address humanitarian challenges with the international community's support, the sheer scale of the crisis, its complexity and its potential for further deterioration call for a renewed sense of urgency.

According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the number of displaced people in the most affected areas has risen from 1.6 million to 2.4 million, while food insecurity and malnutrition have rapidly grown worse. Women and children represent a majority of the displaced as Boko Haram attacks continue and military operations intensify. Now more than ever, the humanitarian community is called to protect and assist people displaced by conflict and the communities hosting them.

In conclusion, it is crucial that Member States in the Lake Chad Basin region continue their joint efforts to address the multiple challenges affecting the region. Angola fully supports regional and international efforts to rehabilitate Lake Chad and give new hope to extremely distressed populations, as well as to combat terrorism until Boko Haram is defeated and to provide assistance to the millions of people in desperate need in the Lake Chad Basin region.

Mr. Lamek (France) (*spoke in French*): I too thank Stephen O'Brien and Jeff Feltman for their presentations on this issue, which is so important to us all. Mr. O'Brien's accounts of the situation in the Lake Chad region in the areas affected by Boko Haram are appalling. Vulnerable populations, including children, young girls and women in particular, are the target of heinous acts. In addition, we remain extremely concerned about the deteriorating humanitarian situation in those countries. We need to address the plight of the people by making every effort to ensure that humanitarian assistance reaches them. The needs are enormous, as working conditions for humanitarian actors remain particularly difficult and Boko Haram is a long way from being defeated, despite the progress achieved. I take this opportunity to salute the courage and commitment of humanitarian actors working under these conditions.

The humanitarian consequences of the actions of Boko Haram, recalled earlier by Stephen O'Brien, are considerable. However, the figures are alarming, since the threat affects nearly 20 million people. There are three times more displaced people today than there were two years ago. It is the fastest growing displacement crisis in Africa. People affected by the crisis require urgent assistance in the form of food, water, shelter, health care, protection and education. Stephen O'Brien told us earlier that 5 million people are in a situation of food insecurity. In Borno state alone, nearly half a million people are deemed to be at the emergency stage — that is to say, very close to starvation. According to UNICEF, 50,000 children are likely to die of malnutrition if they do not receive treatment.

We have, of course, the duty to assist them, but this also means that Boko Haram must be fought with the utmost firmness. The countries of the Lake Chad Basin have taken the initiative to unite their efforts in the framework of a joint multinational force, and we welcome this approach. We support this effort both militarily and financially. France actively supports the operations against Boko Haram carried out by countries in the region. We bring intelligence to the benefit of the countries involved, in addition to logistical support to Chad and Niger by providing equipment and training to the Cameroonian forces. We are all allies in the fight against terrorists and such criminals, whatever form terrorism takes and wherever it occurs.

The ongoing military operations against Boko Haram have already proved their effectiveness. Today, Boko Haram no longer controls territory and has retreated into its safe havens. These important achievements owe a great deal to the work of military forces from Chad and Nigeria. Many soldiers of these armies have already paid the price in blood in the regional offensive, and France respectfully pays tribute to them. The fight against Boko Haram is far from over. The offensive campaign waged by the countries of the region will continue, and it is our duty to support it.

It is equally essential that the fight against Boko Haram be complemented forthwith by development

policies in the affected regions. Without them, this criminal movement will continue to thrive on poverty and the feeling of exclusion that feeds it. France too is involved in that effort; the President of the Republic launched a Lake Chad initiative, which has been implemented by the French Development Agency at the regional level.

In closing, I recall that international humanitarian law applies to all parties. The United Nations and its partners should have access to all persons in need, including displaced persons. We call for immediate, safe and unconditional access to populations in need.

Mr. Seck (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): The Senegalese delegation should like to thank you, Mr. President, for having accepted the request of the British delegation to convene this important open meeting on one of the most sensitive regions of Africa and the world. I also thank both of this morning's briefers, Mr. Feltman and Mr. O'Brien, for their presentations and for the updated information they kindly brought to our attention.

The Lake Chad Basin is one of the parts of Africa where the changes in the characteristics of the physical environment have an impact not only on the daily lives of people but also on the security and stability of the countries that surround it. My country, Senegal, well aware of the many benefits of the joint management of shared natural areas, including rivers and basins, has made inter-State cooperation on water a fundamental pillar of its foreign policy. In that spirit, Senegal launched its Water, Peace and Security initiative, which it intends to promote at the international level, including in the Security Council. Our meeting today confirms the relevance of such an initiative.

Materially, the people of the Lake Chad Basin are imperilled by the drastic shrinkage of the lake due to drought, desertification, climate change and the overexploitation of natural resources. Those phenomena have increased the vulnerability of the inhabitants and aggravated social conflicts over the access, use and sharing of resources from the Lake Chad Basin. This tragic situation has transformed the area into fertile ground for the infiltration and extremist activity of violent terrorist groups, the notorious Boko Haram first among them. In that regard, my delegation recognizes and supports the cooperative efforts of the countries of the Lake Chad Basin Commission to address together both the structural and cyclical challenges facing them, in addition to the rampant insecurity, new threats and duress caused by the ongoing attacks and kidnappings perpetrated by Boko Haram.

The concerted response of the countries of the region, with the support of the African Union, subregional organizations and the international community is beginning to show results, in particular the meaningful military successes carried out by the by the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF). But the countries in the region require additional logistical, financial and even human support, including in the area of intelligence, if they are to more effectively address the numerous challenges facing them with respect to security, humanitarian needs and sustainable development.

According to the latest report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (S/2016/566), the number of displaced persons in the Lake Chad Basin is now 2.4 million people. These displaced persons, most of whom are women and children, are exposed to every danger, including exploitation and abuse. Therefore, along with military action, an appropriate humanitarian response must be provided in confronting numerous challenges, including, among others, migration owing to the security crisis; the specific protection needs of refugees and displaced persons, who number in the millions; and the food insecurity and near-famine conditions that are rampant in the Sahel and areas at the centre of the security threat caused by Boko Haram.

In that regard, my delegation commends the various activities carried out in response to the acute humanitarian needs of the people, recalling the need to harmonize initiatives and for ongoing cooperation among the relevant actors. From that perspective, my delegation welcomes the regional dialogue on protection held in Abuja from 6 to 8 June, at the conclusion of which the participants representing the Governments of Cameroon, Chad, the Niger and Nigeria, with international partners and numerous non-governmental organizations, adopted measures aimed at providing additional protection and assistance to the population of the Lake Chad Basin region. The tripartite agreement on the voluntary repatriation of Nigerian refugees in Cameroon, signed on 9 June by the Governments of Cameroon and Nigeria and the regional representative of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, which deserves to be commended.

My delegation underscores the challenges associated with funding and calls for greater mobilization to bridge the gap, which remains considerable, with only 22 per cent of the necessary funds having been received. That is why my delegation has echoed the appeal made by our two briefers this morning, as well as by our colleague from the United Kingdom, for the $250 million pledged to the Multinational Joint Task Force to be quickly disbursed, and above all for more be done to balance the $723-million budget proposed by the countries of the subregion.

Ms. Power (United States of America): I thank you, Sir, for convening today's meeting on the continuing, ever-more urgent crisis in the Lake Chad Basin, which, as others have noted, deserves greater attention from the Security Council and from the broader international community. I thank Under-Secretaries-General Feltman and O'Brien for their briefings and efforts, and those of their teams, to help tackle the significant security and humanitarian challenges in the region. Mr. O'Brien knows the region better than most after a lifetime of dedication to its people, and I think that his personal commitment is deeply appreciated and very moving.

In April, at the request of President Obama, I led a United States Government delegation to Cameroon, Chad and Nigeria to meet directly with those leading the efforts to counter Boko Haram and respond to the humanitarian disaster that it had created, as well as of course to hear from the communities directly affected by the group's horrific violence. Our delegation included representatives from a range of United States military, humanitarian, political and economic agencies, reflecting our understanding of the comprehensive approach that is needed to defeat Boko Haram in an enduring way and prevent another group like it from emerging in its place.

As part of the trip, we visited camps of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees displaced by Boko Haram. Virtually everyone whom we met had a horror story of having seen homes looted and burned, men and boys murdered, and women and girls raped and abducted. A 14-year-old girl whom I met in a camp in Cameroon told me that when Boko Haram came to her village, one of the fighters told her, "Either you marry me and become my slave, or I will kill you and the rest of your family". This girl became a slave so that her family could live. Imagine a child being forced to make a decision like that. The girl eventually managed to escape her captors, but she will carry the trauma and, perversely, the guilt that she suffered for the rest of her life.

As we all know, atrocities like these persist. On 3 June, for example, Boko Haram attacked a security outpost in the Niger's Diffa region, reportedly killing 24 security personnel and wounding 111 more. More than 50,000 people were displaced as a result, many of whom were already IDPs or refugees. On 29 June, a young boy reportedly blew himself up in the town of Djakana, Cameroon, killing 11 people who had gathered after breaking the fast during Ramadan.

I would like to discuss briefly the security and humanitarian efforts that we need to vanquish this monstrous group. It goes without saying that a robust military effort is critical. Because Boko Haram has demonstrated its ability to move back and forth across international borders, Governments of the region must be able to seemlessly coordinate their efforts to pursue the terrorists across those same borders. That does not always come easily, and it has been very challenging in that region, but the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) is playing a growing role in improving such coordination, as well as in planning and intelligence sharing. Those efforts have produced important gains in recent months, including the freeing of thousands of hostages, destroying dozens of terrorist camps and — this is worth stressing — recovering approximately 75 per cent of the territory that Boko Haram once controlled. Those gains must be preserved, and that requires the international community's supporting and shoring up any weak link in the security posture of the region.

While members of the Council and United Nations Member States unanimously agree that Boko Haram constitutes a threat to international peace and security, unfortunately few are supporting the countries on the front lines of this fight. We applaud the European Union and the United Kingdom for their contributions to the MNJTF. For its part, the United States is supporting the MNJTF and its members with advisers, intelligence-sharing, logistic support, training and non-lethal equipment totalling more than $71 million of assistance, as well as providing $40 million through the Global Security Contingency Fund for training and equipment to help our partners enhance border security. We urge more Member States to step up and support that effort.

To be effective, those military efforts must respect human rights, as the Council importantly underscored

in its presidential statement S/PRST/2016/7, adopted in may on efforts to counter Boko Haram. When Government security forces round up civilians on nothing more than suspicion, use torture to try to extract information, apply scorched-earth tactics or stand by as vigilante groups carry out mob justice or commit any other abuses with impunity, they alienate the very civilians whose support and cooperation is crucial to combating Boko Haram effectively.

As we continue to strengthen the military effort against Boko Haram, we also have to do much more to address the region's dire humanitarian situation — and I stress the word, "dire". As we heard from Under-Secretary-General O'Brien, an estimated 2.5 million people have been displaced within their countries by Boko Haram, while some 150,000 have been pushed beyond their borders. More than 90 per cent of IDPs in the region have been taken in by family members or communities — a testament not only to the tremendous generosity of the people of the region, but also to the huge strain that has been placed on them. A security guard at a university I visited in Yola, Nigeria, had at one point taken in more than 50 members of his extended family who had been displaced by the violence. He is a national hero, and there are tens of thousands of such heros across the region. We therefore have Boko Haram unleashing this true evil, an evil that has seen them pioneering the theft of children and the use of young girls as suicide bombers. But, alongside that evil, we have seen such unbelievable altruism and goodness. I think we of greater means should all be inspired by those heros to do much more.

The situation in the camps is as dire, as we have heard. Médecins sans Frontières (MSF) recently was able to reach the city of Bama in Borno state, Nigeria, which aid workers have been unable to reach for two years due to insecurity. It is home to approximately 10,000 people. MSF found that 15 per cent of the children there were suffering from severe acute malnutrition, and nearly 1,500 people had to be evacuated. Most chillingly, when the group arrived, they found 1,233 graves near the camp, which had been dug in the last year; 480 of those graves appeared to belong to children. And camp residents told MSF of 40 deaths in Bama in the first three weeks of this month due to starvation and treatable illness. Those are the camps we can reach. In the parts of Bormo, Nigeria. Lake Chad and Diffa, the Niger, that are unreachable, one can only imagine how infernal the conditions likely are.

Yet despite that overwhelming need, the $535 million in humanitarian appeals for the affected countries, as we have heard, are grossly underfunded. In Nigeria, only 28 per cent of the appeal has been met, in Cameroon the figure is 22 per cent and in Chad only 17 per cent. We have provided more than $253 million in humanitarian assistance to countries in the Lake Chad Basin in the past two years. We, like the United Kingdom, are considering now what more we can do — because the situation demands it. More countries need to step up immediately.

In addition to strengthening those military and humanitarian efforts, we also need to address the chronic problems that helped to fuel Boko Haram's rise in the first place, and which, if left unaddressed, will lead to further instability and insecurity. That is my final point. We have to play the long-term game in countering violent extremism. That means investing more in the education of young people from marginalized communities, which can open up opportunities that provide a brighter path than the one offered by terrorist groups who exploit marginalization. It means building law-enforcement bodies that are actually accountable to the communities they serve and work to earn their trust. It means amplifying the voices of religious leaders who condemn terrorism and seek to exercise their faith in moderate and peaceful ways. It means rooting out the rampant corruption that has long siphoned away resources from the people who need it most, and fostering inclusive institutions that serve all people, rather than one group at the expense of another. That is a daunting agenda. And one of the challenges we face now is that we have to simultaneously tackle those root causes and address this agenda at the same time that we keep people alive in the here-and-now who desperately need our humanitarian support.

Let me conclude. It just so happened that the delegation that I led to the region coincided with the two-year anniversary of the abduction of 276 Nigerian schoolgirls from the town of Chibok. As everyone present here knows, all but one of those girls are still missing, presumably held by Boko Haram. I had an opportunity to meet with eight girls who were taken captive on the awful night in April 2014 when their school was overrun. Herded into open-roof trucks, a few of the girls managed to escape by actually clinging to the branches overhead as the trucks were being driven away from the school. A few of the other girls I met escaped because one of the trucks mercifully broke

down and a number of girls jumped out of the backs of the truck. The girls I met were studying at the American University of Nigeria in Yola, where they had been given scholarships. Those were girls who, prior to their abduction, had not completed secondary school. Now they are taking accelerated courses to prepare them for the lives ahead. Eight young women, along with 16 other Chibok girls, were studying for a university degree, and they were pursuing a range of professions. All spoke ambitiously and idealistically about studying medicine, engineering or accounting. All of them shared something very important in common: they were determined to go back to Chibok and help rebuild their community. One of the young women told me, "We want to make the world proud". Think of the profound character of a group of young women who, after being taken from their classrooms in a dangerous area where they just wanted to complete their exams, taken in the dead of night by Boko Haram, now are determined as ever to go back to that community and who just want to make the rest of us proud. I have no doubt that these girls will, as will so many other young men and women in Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and the Niger. If only, we help empower them to do so.

Mr. González de Linares Palou (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Japan and the United Kingdom for having convened this informative briefing. I also thank Mr. Stephen O'Brien for having shared with us his assessment of the situation in the region in the wake of his May visit, and in particular for sharing his recommendations as to how we avoid a humanitarian catastrophe in that region. I also thank Under-Secretary-General Jeffrey Feltman for his briefing in the area of security, and specifically on the progress made and the challenges that still lie ahead in the fight against Boko Haram.

I am not going to repeat the chilling information that we have already heard. I think that we are all very aware of the extreme gravity of the situation. For my part, however, I would initially like to make two comments.

The first is that the humanitarian crises in the Lake Chad Basin happen so often not that they are becoming a chronic phenomenon. If those humanitarian crises are no longer timely, the response of international cooperation must also not be timely. That is why emergency humanitarian aid should be combined with development activities that promote the resilience of the region.

The second comment is that the humanitarian crisis in the Lake Chad Basin requires a comprehensive response, as it is the result of a combination of factors: fragile State authority with limited control of the territory, poverty, migration, climate change, terrorism and violent extremism, among other factors. I would like to focus on those issues.

First, with regard to violent extremism, many delegations have already referred to the fight against Boko Haram through the Multinational Joint Task Force. Spain also joins in recognizing the efforts being made by Chad, Cameroon, theNiger and Nigeria in that regard. We also echo the call for closer regional cooperation to combat this terrorist group. I would also like to point out the importance of ensuring that those operations take into account the specific protection needs of women and girls. It is crucial to provide medical and psychosocial services for survivors. It is also important to dismantle the trafficking networks, as women and girls often end up as victims. Guaranteeing security in and around the camps for internally displaced persons is also important. As has already been stated, military actions are not enough. There also needs to be a relevant component in the fight against violent extremism, which fuels the terrorism threat. Boko Haram substantiates its acts with rhetoric that squarely opposes education and fundamental rights and freedoms, particularly of women and girls. Winning the communication and awareness-raising battle — especially with regard to youths — in order to counter terrorist groups is a pending task.

The second issue to which I would like to refer is climate change. During our meeting on the challenges in the Sahel region (see S/PV.7699), convened barely two months ago under the Egyptian presidency, Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ibn Chambas identified climate change as being one of the main challenges confronting the region. Lake Chad is disappearing, thereby exacerbating the already very difficult conditions being experienced by the people of the region. That is causing forced internal displacement and migration and compounding threats such as terrorism, organized crime and violent extremism. In that regard, I would like to draw attention to the interesting proposal made by the Executive Director of the Counter-Terrorism Committee to analyse whether the effects of climate change worsen the fragility of certain populations and whether they are making them even more vulnerable to violent extremism and

recruitment by terrorist groups. That seems quite timely to us when it comes to the area we are discussing, namely, the Lake Chad Basin.

Migration is the third issue I want to discuss. One of the consequences of the terrorism perpetuated by Boko Haram is the tragedy resulting from the massive displacement of populations, with the parallel emergence of camps with enormous needs for basic services. Many of the displaced opt to migrate, often becoming victims of human trafficking networks. As proof of that challenge we need only look to the thousands of deaths in the Mediterranean Sea and the desert, including as well the exisitng links between terrorism and trafficking in migrants.

I would like to conclude by saying that today's meeting is a good example of how early-warning mechanisms are functioning correctly. The Security Council is being informed in a timely manner about the situation the region, and on recent occassions it has expressed itself on the matter — the most recent being on the eve of the security summit held in Abuja in May. Nevertheless, if we want to change the course of events, there will have to be greater political will the part of everyone. Early warning will serve little purpose if it is no accompanied by an early response.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Jeffrey Feltman and Under-Secretary-General Stephen O'Brien for their briefings.

The countries of Central and West Africa have recently further strengthened their cooperation on security, and the overall situation in the region is stable. The countries of the Lake Chad Basin have established the Multinational Joint Task Force and intensified their fight against terrorism, making significant progress in that regard, for which China expresses its appreciation. The security problem and the humanitarian situation in the region remain very serious, however. Repeated terrorist attacks and rampant criminal activities, such as piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, pose a threat to the security and stability of the region.

The international community should support the countries of Central and West Africa, including the countries of the Lake Chad Basin region, in the following areas.

First, they should support African countries in their counter-terrorism efforts, which constitute a very important component of international counter-terrorism efforts. The international community must actively support and assist the countries of the region in their capacity-building to fight terrorism, enabling the Multinational Joint Task Force to effectively conduct its operations to eliminate the threats to the countries, particularly in the Lake Chad Basin, posed by terrorist organizations and activities.

Secondly, there must be greater cooperation with regional and subregional organizations, including the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States and the Lake Chad Basin Commission. The international community must fully respect the leading role played by regional organizations in addressing the region's problems, and draw on the unique expertise and advantages of those organizations with a view to building synergies and promoting solutions to regional hotspot issues through such methods as dialogue, mediation and good-offices.

Thirdly, humanitarian aid should be provided to the region as soon as possible. The international community should adhere to the purposes set forth in the Charter of the United Nations and the fundamental principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality, as established by relevant General Assembly resolutions, and actively provide humanitarian assistance to the countries concerned based on respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of nations, in order to mitigate the food shortage and insecurity facing regional countries.

Fourthly, countries of the region must also be provided assistance so that they can achieve development by addressing the root causes of conflict. The international community should also increase its financial assistance to those countries on the basis of respect for their national sovereignty so that they can truly build their capacities to promote economic and social development.

China has always actively supported Africa in capacity-building, abiding by its policy of sincerity, good faith and friendship towards Africa, characterized by prioritizing justice over interests. During the Chinese presidency in April, we took the initiative to hold an open debate of the Security Council on piracy in the Gulf of Guinea (see S/PV.7675), which resulted in presidential statement S/PRST/2016/4, in which the Council offered a positive response to the aspirations of the regional countries for international cooperation in combatting piracy, thereby building an international

consensus on fighting piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, offering a new approach to a collective response to the piracy issue.

China will continue to implement the outcome of the Johannesburg Summit and the China-Africa Cooperation Forum, and is ready to work with the international community and countries concerned to support the countries of Central and West Africa in their efforts to achieve lasting peace and common prosperity.

Mr. Vitrenko (Ukraine): I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Feltman and Under-Secretary-General O'Brien for their comprehensive briefings, as well as the United Kingdom delegation for requesting this meeting.

The humanitarian situation in the Lake Chad Basin continues to destabilize the entire West Africa region. The food security and nutritional situation in the area is next to disastrous. Extreme poverty, interethnic and intercommunal tensions, climate change — all these factors contribute to the sad state of affairs. People living in insecure areas continue to face the deterioration of their livelihoods, including farming and fishing. In addition, during the past decade, the rise of violent extremism complicated an already dire situation in the region.

In that regard, Ukraine fully supports all international initiatives aimed at the stabilization of the region. The regional efforts to address all key conflict drivers must also be strongly encouraged. Humanitarian aid has to be delivered wherever it is needed most, especially for those most vulnerable, including displaced persons and refugees, in host areas and areas inaccessible to humanitarian programmes. Borno state in Nigeria, which hosts more than 1 million internally displaced persons, is one of the vivid cases in point here. This endeavour requires substantial funding from the international donor community. Unfortunately, as we have just heard, only 28 per cent of the United Nations humanitarian response plan for the Lake Chad Basin has been financed so far. We therefore encourage donors to support United Nations efforts in this respect.

International assistance will not be effective if we do not provide a proper response to the major threat to the region, that is, Boko Haram. As was rightly mentioned by today's briefers, Boko Haram's activities undermine the international community's and regional efforts to take forward the recovery of the countries affected.

Confronting the Boko Haram threat in the countries of the Lake Chad Basin requires the adoption and subsequent implementation of coherent national programmes aimed at combating violent extremism. In that light, we commend the results of the second Regional Security Summit, held on 14 May in Abuja, which helped to better evaluate and prepare the regional response to the threat posed by this terrorist group.

We call on the United Nations Secretariat to support these regional efforts as much as possible, in particular through the relevant United Nations Offices in Africa, including the enhancement of cooperation with the Multinational Joint Task Force in developing and strengthening strategic communications among the intelligence and counter-terrorism authorities of the States affected.

We are also looking forward to the planned visit to the Lake Chad Basin States by the Counter-Terrorism Committee in October this year. In our view, it should be aimed first and foremost at elaborating the further steps required for strengthening and promoting cooperation between the international community and the region so as to assist it in countering terrorism, including through the development of a relevant regional comprehensive strategy.

Mrs. Adnin (Malaysia): I join earlier speakers in welcoming our discussion today on the situation in the Lake Chad Basin, which we, too, feel is timely, and we thank the United Kingdom for having requested it. This discussion, in my view, could also set the stage for the wider conversation on peacebuilding in Africa that the presidency will convene tomorrow.

I wish to add my voice to those expressing appreciation to Under-Secretary-General Feltman and Under-Secretary-General O'Brien for their respective briefings, which shed much light on the situation there. Earlier speakers touched on the security and humanitarian challenges faced by the region and on possible responses by the international community. With a view to contributing to the discussion, I intend to focus my statement on similar themes, but I also intend to focus on the theme of the protection of children in the Basin area.

Malaysia shares the concerns expressed by Council members on the deteriorating security and humanitarian situation of the roughly 50 million inhabitants of the wider Basin area, which straddles Chad, Cameroon, the Niger and Nigeria. On the security front, my delegation

notes that the civilian population of the Basin is doubly impacted, first by the worsening humanitarian situation, which results partly from both climate and human factors, and, secondly, by the security threat posed by violent extremists, particularly Boko Haram.

Clearly, Boko Haram has played a role in exacerbating the already dire humanitarian situation in the Lake Chad Basin, and we recognize the needs of the population. We support the call made and encourage donors not to overlook but instead support the humanitarian response to the region. The fact that Boko Haram retains the capability to launch large-scale attacks and undertake complex ambushes and is fairly proficient with improvised explosive devices, as well as its pledge of allegiance to the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and Da'esh, give rise to much concern, not least because the humanitarian situation of the civilian population in the Basin area is already vulnerable and precarious.

In this connection, Malaysia is pleased to note that the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), established last year by the Lake Chad Basin Commission member States and the African Union, has been operationalized and is undertaking active operations against Boko Haram. Apart from the MNJTF operations, we also welcome the various other measures undertaken by the countries in the region to prevent attacks and reduce civilian targets. The improved coordination and intelligence-gathering among the MNJTF authorities that allow for successful pre-emptive operations are also commendable.

It is striking to note that nearly one of every five Boko Haram suicide bombers is a child; almost three quarters are girls, as highlighted by UNICEF in its most recent report. This is utterly abhorrent. Despite the criticism levelled at it, the MNJTF is a concrete example of what concerted political will and military action, coupled with regional solidarity, cooperation and resolve, can achieve.

In combating the scourge of terrorism and violent extremism, all parties must continue to adhere to international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law. We fully understand, however, that in order to ensure its continued functioning, the MNJTF requires the predictable and sustained provision of necessary resources. We support the call for States and other partners in a position to do so, including those from the region, to positively consider meeting such needs. The protracted situation of insecurity, instability and lack of socioeconomic development in the Basin area continues to expose the exceeding vulnerability of the civilian population, particularly of women and children, boys and girls.

In this regard, I wish to highlight the deplorable and unacceptable situation faced by children at the hands of Boko Haram. Since 2013, at least 1.3 million children have been uprooted or displaced as they seek to flee the violence. Among the key losses suffered is access to education and to health care. Loss of access to education is particularly worrying. Left unchecked, the large number of uneducated and idle youth provide a pool of potential recruits not just for terrorists but also for other armed criminal groups, thereby perpetuating the cycle of violence in an already insecure and unstable region. As such, we stress the importance of ensuring that all children, including and especially displaced children in the affected areas, continue to receive an education.

Malaysia condemns in the strongest terms the practice of abducting children for recruitment and using them as combatants or human shields by terrorists and other parties to conflict in the region. Such practices constitute grave violations against children for which the perpetrators must be held to account. These children and the many others who are hidden within the ranks of the group are victims of Boko Haram's inhuman and ruthless tactics. We encourage the MNJTF authorities to provide special protection for children associated with Boko Haram. We condemn on equal terms the abduction of women and girls, who are then subjected to sexual violence and forced marriage by the group, as appalling and unacceptable.

Moving forward, we wish to flag the concern that even upon their release or separation from Boko Haram, children face serious challenges in getting their lives back. They are often stigmatized by their own communities. We wish to stress that in such situations, children must primarily be seen as victims who deserve treatment and support for their eventual reintegration into the community. They should not have to suffer being ostracized and shamed.

By way of conclusion, I wish to reaffirm Malaysia's commitment to working effectively with all partners and stakeholders in a coordinated and concerted manner, with a view to collectively addressing the dire situation in the Lake Chad Basin.

Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to thank Mr. Jeffrey Feltman and Mr. Stephen O'Brien for their briefings this morning regarding the humanitarian and security situation in the Lake Chad Basin.

We remain concerned about the security situation there as well as the humanitarian crisis that has engulfed that region for several years now and which, despite the progress made by the countries of the region in recent months, continues to affect millions of people, owing both to the impact of extremists, who use appalling tactics to sow fear among the population, and to all of the socioeconomic factors that have historically affected the countries of the region. Food insecurity, poverty, exclusion, drought, transnational organized crime and the clashes between local communities, in addition to the threat posed by the terrorist group Boko Haram, responsible for forced displacement and great instability, have undermined the normal development of a region with great human and economic potential.

In that connection, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela once again emphatically condemns the acts carried out by the terrorist group Boko Haram in the Lake Chad region, which represent grave attacks against the peace and security of the people of Cameroon, Chad, Nigeria and the Niger in recent years, and which exacerbate the already fragile situation, particularly the humanitarian aspect.

It is absolutely reprehensible that the actions of that terrorist group include the abduction of children, young people and women, and the destruction of educational facilities and other civilian infrastructure. In that regard, we have been and will continue to be unwavering in our support of all Council initiatives to promote a sustainable solution to this terrorist threat. The most recent initiative was presidential statement S/PRST/2016/7, of 13 May, which reaffirmed the commitment to decisively fight terrorism in all of its forms and manifestations.

We wish to express our solidarity with the victims of Boko Haram's criminal actions, and we demand the immediate and unconditional freeing of all abducted people that are still captive, including those who are victims of forced recruitment.

The humanitarian calamity affecting the region should be the cause of great concern and immediate attention, especially considering the massive numbers of internally displaced persons and refugees who have fled their homes to save their lives. According to the latest reports from United Nations specialized agencies, the number of persons internally displaced over the past year exceeds 70,000, with almost 7,000 refugees. As can be expected, the situation does not allow the victims to lead a full and peaceful life, and they are deprived of their most fundamental rights to basic services, education and culture. Moreover, this undermines at all levels the ability of the subregion and the countries concerned to respond.

At a time when humankind faces significant humanitarian challenges, crises such as the one in the Lake Chad subregion, which in some cases have less media coverage, fall squarely on this Organization and the international community, and they must receive increased attention. It is crucial for the various sectors of the international community that have pledged financial resources to this issue to fully keep their commitments with a view to addressing and solving the humanitarian and development challenges.

The efforts spearheaded by countries in the region in order to effectively address the situation and facilitate humanitarian access in this risky environment are laudable, as are the efforts of various United Nations entities and international organizations to provide assistance and relief to the victims of these crises. Similarly, we welcome the efforts of Nigeria, Chad, the Niger and Cameroon, through the Multinational Joint Task Force, to fight Boko Haram. We commend their achievements in recent months, which has resulted in greater stability in the region. We wish them continued success in their coordinated efforts in all areas to combat the security threat.

The regional security summit held in Abuja on 14 May was an appropriate forum to reaffirm the political commitment of regional and international players to strengthening their joint security strategy aimed at curbing the spread of terrorism. We hope that its results are duplicated and lead to concrete improvements.

In that connection, all solutions to the scourge of terrorism must be consistent with the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, including the sovereignty and self-determination of peoples. As part of the effort in addressing the terrorist threat to international peace and security, we consider the role of public policy to be essential as an engine of social stability. Consequently, we encourage the countries in the Lake Chad region to continue making

efforts to promote inclusive educational, economic and political Government strategies for sustainable development. That is why it is urgent to strengthen State capacities at all levels, including regional and local levels, in order to prevent and combat the causes of the security threats. The efforts of the countries in the subregion must be accompanied by the decisive support of the United Nations and its agencies.

The work of the Lake Chad Basin Commission in various areas to counter the actions of Boko Haram have been of great value, and we believe that, with the leadership of affected countries and the support of the international community, there should be coordinated strategies to prevent, combat and eliminate this threat to international peace and security.

Finally, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela reaffirms that the ultimate defeat of terrorism cannot be based solely on military action. We must make progress in addressing the structural elements of poverty that drive the emergence and spread of violence. Otherwise, military victories on the battlefield will not guarantee sustained peace.

Mr. Bermúdez (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I wish to thank the delegation of the United Kingdom for convening this meeting on an issue of great importance, namely, the situation in the Lake Chad Basin. I also wish to thank Under-Secretary-General Jeffrey Feltman and Under-Secretary-General Stephen O'Brien for their detailed and illuminating briefings.

Just over two weeks ago, the Security Council heard Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, deliver a briefing here in the Chamber on the latest report (S/2016/566) of Secretary-General on his Office (see S/PV.7735), during which he highlighted the precarious humanitarian and security environment in the Lake Chad Basin. Uruguay's brief statement on this issue does not reflect any intention to understate the impact of this crisis, for given the multidimensional nature of these problems, we could clearly explore these issues at much greater length.

Uruguay takes a comprehensive approach to the crises in this region, considering that the situation has devolved to its present state due to the sum of a great number of converging elements that are further aggravating existing structural deficiencies. The deplorable security environment, made worse primarily due to the terrorist threat posed by Boko Haram, the lack of food and the unmet basic needs of the populations, have led to 2.6 million people to leave their homes forcibly — with 71,718 registered displaced persons in a little over a year and an estimated 43,193 others who have not been registered — which further destabilizes an already fragile region.

We are talking about 2.6 million people who had to abandon everything due to the crisis in the region, 2.4 million people affected by Boko Haram violence and 3.8 million people suffering from extreme food insecurity. For the international community as a whole, these numbers may not seem so significant on a global scale. However, given that the population of Uruguay hovers around 3.5 million, just making that comparison has a meaningful and disconcerting impact on us. The question we must ask ourselves is, What can the international community do to at least ease the crises facing the 21 million people who live in these crisis-affected regions?

First, we must recognize the work of the specialized agencies of the United Nations — the World Food Programme, UNICEF, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the World Health Organization, among others — as well as of the Central Emergency Response Fund, which, insofar as their capacities allow them, have tried to meet the most urgent needs of those people. The 90-day emergency response plan is yet another tool that will undoubtedly make a significant difference in the situation in the Lake Chad Basin.

Secondly, we must address the root causes of the crisis: hunger, lack of education, lack of access to safe drinking water, insecurity and lack of medical facilities, among many others. We need sustainable solutions for these populations so that they can build their resilience and adapt to adversity.

With regard to Boko Haram, in addition to its warped or deviant interpretations of religion, it clearly seeks to intstil and exploit fear in its victims. It has also been shown to have strategic interests in the border areas of Nigeria, the Niger and Cameroon, including control over the flow of weapons, human trafficking and trafficking in ivory. We stress the fact that when its members are not engaged in terrorism they operate as common criminals. We need to pursue our strategy against them with all means at our disposal.

Uruguay commends all of the emergency plans and initiatives that have proven to be important instruments of assistance to the populations at risk, but we must also continue to work with the Governments of Cameroon, Chad, the Niger and Nigeria to build capacities that will enable them to address the root causes that fuel these crises.

Mr. Safronkov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Jeffrey Feltman and Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Stephen O'Brien for their detailed briefings on the military-political and humanitarian situations in the Lake Chad Basin region.

Of particular concern are the ongoing activities of Boko Haram, which continues to undermine stability in Cameroon, the Niger, Nigeria and Chad and threatens many other countries of the continent. We recall that Boko Haram has declared its allegiance to the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham, which has become entrenched in Libya, where chaos and a de facto power vacuum have prevailed for the past five years. That linkage makes it even more urgent than ever to find an urgent, cohesive and robust response to the terrorist threat in Africa. We are also concerned about the new and innovative tactics used by Boko Haram, which avoids direct confrontations with Government armed forces and prefers attackingpeaceful civilians and civilian infrastructure through suicide bombers and improvised explosive devices.

It will be impossible to improve the humanitarian situation, resolve the issue of refugees and many problems linked to the terrorist threat in the region without eliminating the threat posed by Boko Haram. That is evident to us all today and is our highest priority. We note the efforts of the Lake Chad Basin Commission, their Multinational Joint Task Force and Benin, and welcome the results they have achieved. We are convinced that collective action alone can defeat the terrorist hydra in Africa and elsewhere in the world.

We also welcome the positive decision taken at the recent African Union Summit in Kigali to establish an anti-terrorist fund to meet the needs of the continent, which will play an important role in the elimination of terrorism throughout Africa. We also highly commend the measures taken by the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel and the United Nations specialized agencies that provide multifaceted assistance to the Lake Chad Basin countries. The most important decisions have been taken and must now be implemented. Russia will maintain its active multilateral and bilateral cooperation with the States of Africa.

Mr. Taula (New Zealand): I thank Under-Secretaries-General Feltman and O'Brien for their first-hand engagement and insights on the Lake Chad Basin.

As we have heard, the region faces a range of very serious challenges, including the environmental and economic effects of climate change, lack of development, youth populations that aspire to greater economic and political participation, low commodity prices, and the presence of groups promoting an extremist ideology. We are deeply concerned by the displacement of millions of people across the region, many of whom are women and children, due to the actions of Boko Haram. This has been further exacerbated by the growing number of attacks in the southern Diffa region of the Niger. The large-scale displacement risks fuelling further regional instability, and we agree that a concerted effort is required on resettlement and recovery for those affected.

Mr. O'Brien outlined that there are over 9 million people in need across the Lake Chad Basin region. Boko Haram's continued actions are exacerbating an already difficult humanitarian situation. The disruption of farming and herding activities is contributing to a looming food crisis in north-east Nigeria. Today's meeting is therefore important in highlighting to the Security Council and the international community the sheer scale of the problems.

We welcome the gains made by the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) and the Nigerian army against Boko Haram, including the rescue of over 2,000 abductees and the arrest of key Boko Haram members. We are also encouraged by the enhanced coordination by Governments in the Lake Chad Basin area, including on intelligence-sharing with the establishment of an intelligence fusion cell in N'Djamena in April.

New Zealand supports and encourages regional solutions to regional issues. The MNTJF represents a practical example of a collective, coordinated regional response to a threat that is inherently regional and cross-border in nature.

Ensuring that the MNJTF is adequately financed is critical. It also speaks to a deeper ongoing problem

in the international community's approach to funding regionally led counter-terrorism and peace operations. New Zealand is strongly supportive of African calls for a long-term solution to these financing questions that would provide regional organizations with more stable and predictable funding, recognizing that there also needs to be flexibility in specific cases.

As our briefers have said, this is not just a security issue, and a military response is only part of the solution to defeating Boko Haram. It is necessary to address the conditions that have allowed extremism to take hold in the region, including political and economic marginalization, limited access to education, scarce employment and economic opportunities, and food insecurity.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of Japan.

I thank Mr. Jeffrey Feltman and Mr. Stephen O'Brien for their important briefings.

The Lake Chad Basin faces growing vulnerability at an alarming scale. Approximately 9.2 million people — a population greater than that of New York City — are in need of urgent humanitarian assistance and face violence perpetrated by Boko Haram. That will be compounded by the rainy season and a lean crop intake. Japan is deeply concerned by the situation on the ground, which requires a careful and dedicated response. In addressing this situation, I would like to take up two points.

First, regional military cooperation through the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) is absolutely vital to the Lake Chad Basin. That regional initiative, through the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC), together with national ownership and leadership, plays an irreplaceable role in regional stabilization. Only through effective MNJTF operations can vulnerable communities receive access to humanitarian assistance. Once areas are liberated from Boko Haram insurgents, many other activities can be effectively undertaken in addition to the efforts of the MNJTF.

The second point I would like to underline is that improved livelihoods are equally vital for stabilizing the region. The United Nations, regional and subregional organizations, national Governments and donors must all work together to restore community livelihoods in the long-term while also supporting the immediate humanitarian response. The impact of the violence caused by Boko Haram is wide-ranging. Jobs and local economies are threatened, education and health services have disappeared, community institutions are undermined, and women and children have been major victims. This impact leads to major challenges at the local level. In Diffa, Niger, trade in the local specialties of hot peppers and dried fish remains banned out of concern that profits could fund Boko Haram. Corn growing is also banned over fears that the corn fields could provide safe haven to Boko Haram. Entire community livelihoods are at stake without economic and social development.

Tomorrow, the Council will hold an open debate on peacebuilding in Africa, focusing on institution-building. Communities in the Lake Chad Basin need immediate humanitarian assistance, but extending humanitarian response is no substitute for rebuilding livelihoods and institutions. People require extended State authority, credible governance, improved public administration, and expanded security. The international community must stand ready to support both the region's immediate needs and long-term efforts to sustain peace. Japan is ready to do its part.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

The meeting rose at noon.